

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BALANCING THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office announced that they anticipate we will have an \$8 billion surplus in this fiscal year. This is a remarkable announcement. It is an historic announcement.

We have waited for over 30 years for the good news that the budget would, at long last, be balanced. However, as important and as significant as this may be, I urge that we not celebrate excessively. Why is this? It is because we still have a great deal of heavy lifting to do.

The announcement does not recognize the tragic condition that we face as a Nation with respect to our fiscal affairs. First, it does not recognize that we continue to operate on a consolidated Federal budget or unified Federal budget which rolls all trust fund operations into the bottom line.

As a consequence, it glosses over the fact that we are borrowing \$100 billion

in fiscal 1998 from the Social Security Trust Fund because that Trust Fund is running a surplus. It is running a surplus because the baby-boom generation is in its peak earning years, and it is contributing at the maximum level, and it is not drawing out.

So in reality, if we would discount this subsidy to the operating budget from the Social Security Trust Funds, we would not have an \$8 billion surplus. Instead, we would have a \$92 billion deficit.

We have some heavy lifting to do to overcome this \$92 billion deficit that remains. That is one reason we should not celebrate too strongly.

Secondly, we have to remember that we have a debt of approximately \$5.4 trillion, approximately \$20,000 for every man, woman and child in this country. Indeed, it is heartwarming to learn that under one theory of calculating the budget, we have a surplus of \$8 billion. But, remember, this is little more than about \$17 for each man, woman and child that we can take off of that \$20,000 debt.

So, again, we have a long ways to go. In fact, if you look at the years over which this surplus has been projected, we would probably not be able to reduce that debt by as much as even \$1,000. So we have a ways to go in terms of making a dent in this vast national debt.

A third reason that we should not celebrate too strongly is that we have obligations that we have incurred in the operation of the Social Security program and the Medicare program that are not funded. The unfunded liabilities of those two programs are conservatively estimated to be at least \$3 trillion and \$9 trillion respectively. That is a total of at least \$12 trillion, or approximately two and a half times the current national debt.

We have a great deal to do in reforming and revising the Social Security and Medicare programs, improving their funding, to make sure that this \$9 trillion or \$3 trillion unfunded liability in those respective programs does not hit us squarely between the eyes or our children and grandchildren between the eyes 30, 40, 50 years from now.

So, although we should tarry and recognize the significance of this accomplishment, of having at least a \$8 billion surplus in terms of historic calculations, we should not be exuberant. In fact, I do not even think we should crack out the champagne. We could probably celebrate with a near beer and enjoy the fizz, but remain sober and committed to yet attacking with renewed vigor the problems that lie ahead in making sure that our financial fiscal house is in order in this country, and making sure that this country has a financial condition that we are proud to leave as a legacy to our children and grandchildren.

We should not allow the partisanship that has unfortunately divided us on all too many occasions to overcome our commitment to doing the right

thing by the next generation in the years to come.

THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE BY THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a subject that is on the minds of all Americans, the pursuit of justice by the Independent Counsel.

In recent weeks, we have seen the personal character and motives of Kenneth Starr subjected to an unprecedented number of insults and attacks by friends of the President, attacks which are designed to delay justice and shift focus away from the truth.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, these attacks only tarnish our system of law in America. Our criminal justice system was designed to operate outside the political arena. It was intended that officers of the court would seek justice based on the presentation of the facts and the determination of whether conduct based on these facts was unlawful or not.

The search for truth and determination of the facts has sadly become an indictment by political operatives of the Independent Counsel and his office. Diverting attention from the facts of this case does not serve justice, it simply demeans the Presidency.

Mr. Speaker, Congress passed the Independent Counsel statute in response to the Watergate experience of 1974, assuring that an independently appointed court official would best be able to seek justice involving allegations against high government officials. Moving the prosecution process outside the White House best assures that credible allegations of wrongdoing against such officials will not go unchecked. It is certainly not in our national interests for a President to investigate himself.

The history of the Independent Counsel statute is interesting. Congress reauthorized it three times. President Clinton himself signed the reauthorization legislation in 1994. Many Members of this Congress back in 1994 voted for such reauthorization.

Under the law, the Independent Counsel is given the same investigative authority as the Department of Justice. The authority includes conducting grand jury investigations, granting immunity to witnesses, and challenging in court any privilege claims or attempts to withhold evidence on national security grounds.

We must also understand, Mr. Speaker, that obtaining testimony by subpoena is an important investigative tool to determine the facts of allegations of wrongdoing by the President. Without facts, neither truth nor justice can be preserved.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General appointed Mr. Starr through a judicial